

Good morning Honorary members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am testifying today because I OPPOSE HB 6355.

My name is Jordan Levine and I am the proud owner of A Better Way 2A. A Better Way 2A is something that I started almost a year ago as a way to encourage inclusiveness and diversity in the gun community. I did this when a very liberal, gay friend of mine wanted a firearm for self defense, but expressed concern about learning to shoot in a welcoming environment. Since then, I've made it my goal to show people of all backgrounds, gender identities, races and political ideologies that there's a spot in the gun community for them.

What I've learned in my time doing this, is that there was already this substantial, yet largely underrepresented population of left-leaning gun owners. The reason I'm saying all of this is because in almost every conversation I've had with them from across the political spectrum, there has been a common and resounding belief: red flag laws are a bad idea.

I'm obviously aware that we already have a red flag law in Connecticut. While I personally disagree with the concept, how it is currently written at least allows for some discretion on the part of the State Attorney or the police, in terms of determining the validity of the complaint being made. This is all thanks to the word "shall" in line 17 of the existing bill which the co-sponsors of this bill would like to change to the word "may". One word. One word removes the need for an investigation that could not only save time for other cases with credible threats, but also save lives.

Now, out of the many things regarding this bill that I disagree with, this stuck out to me. It amazes me, that after a year wrought with the pain and suffering caused as a result of police unaccountability, that this bill is still being proposed as is. That people have the nerve to introduce a bill that will not only force more people into violent encounters with the police, but one that removes the due diligence required to ensure innocent people do not get hurt or killed.

Because of a law similar to this, Breonna Taylor is dead.

If police were required to search Breonna's apartment to verify their information, before acting on it and realizing it was inaccurate, she would still be alive. So in this bill, there is no proposition to include a penalty for false reporting. Police are also not required to validate every outlandish or vindictive claim made by an angry in-law or spouse, but instead can take them as fact, and respond "appropriately". If this bill passes, there will be casualties.

Now even though I feel like your hearts are in the right place here, I don't think you've considered this. I've been a gun owner for a third of my life. I also saw a psychiatrist for two and a half years at the peak of my struggle with mental illness. This is something that I may have thought twice about or avoided entirely had I had reason to believe that I could lose my right to self defense. A statistic that we don't have is the number of gun owners who have sought help, who are still here. Instead of guns being taken away from the mentally unwell, if this bill passes, what we will have is gun owners who avoid seeking help for fear of losing their second amendment right. So, same amount of guns, but with owners who won't get help.

Overall this bill is just riddled with issues and unintended consequences and while I understand the need to reduce gun violence, we have to do it the right way.

Thank you all for your time and for your consideration.

If anyone has any questions, I would be happy to answer them now.